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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of 47 members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 7 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of the Netherlands to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations presents its compliments to the President of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly and has the honour to inform him that the Kingdom of the Netherlands has decided to present its candidature to the Human Rights Council, at the elections to be held during the sixtieth session of the Assembly on 9 May 2006.

The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations herewith communicates a document containing the Netherlands' voluntary pledges and commitments, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251, to be published on the United Nations website (see annex).

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Annex to the note verbale dated 7 April 2006 from the Prime Minister of the Netherlands to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Netherlands' voluntary pledges and commitments on human rights

Candidature

The Netherlands, in close cooperation with other UN members, aspires to make the Human Rights Council an **effective, efficient and credible human rights body** that can live up to its mandate. The creation of an effective Human Rights Council will be a weighty responsibility, especially for its initial members. We stand ready to fulfil our responsibility for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.

What makes the Netherlands a unique candidate for the Human Rights Council?

Our long standing tradition in human rights and the rule of law.

Being one of the **founding members of the UN,** the Netherlands is firmly committed to the world-wide promotion and protection of human rights. For decades, human rights have been a cornerstone of Dutch policy in foreign affairs and development cooperation. Our obligation to the international promotion of human rights is even enshrined in our national constitution. The Hague is often referred to as the '**legal capital of the world**', because it hosts the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). The Netherlands has always been actively involved in the development of multilateral structures and we are a strong supporter of the UN Secretary-General's proposals for reform of the UN, as laid down in the report 'In larger freedom'.

Our active contribution to international co-operation.

The Netherlands actively contributes to the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights, inter alia through its large-scale development cooperation programme. We are a major donor country, and an engaged one. The Netherlands is one of the few countries that reserves 0.8% of its Gross National Product in accordance with international norms for development cooperation (USD 5 billion annually). Furthermore the Netherlands is one of the largest donors to the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR), to UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR and pull our weight in UN peace keeping operations. In addition, the Netherlands supports human-rights-related programmes at country level, through both bilateral and multilateral channels. We are convinced that dialogue, mutual understanding and respect, as well as knowledge about each other's countries are crucial components of a sensible approach to human rights.

*The Netherlands **pledges** to:*

1. Advance the protection and promotion of human rights on an international level

- The Netherlands will **participate actively** in the work of the Human Rights Council. It will work without prejudice with other UN Member States, civil society representatives and special procedures to ensure that the new Council

functions more effectively, in a non-selective manner and through engagement, dialogue and co-operation.

- The Netherlands will **remain one of the largest donors to the OHCHR**. It will increase its non-earmarked contributions, currently about 5.5 million US dollars annually, giving the High Commissioner full authority to use our contribution in her efforts of mainstreaming human rights throughout the UN system in accordance with her own priorities.
- The Netherlands will continue to be the largest donor to the core resources of UNDP and UNFPA and also a substantial donor to the work of UNHCR, thus contributing to the implementation of economic and social rights, including the right to development.
- The Netherlands will continue to actively pursue its **bilateral human rights policies,** which emphasize dialogue, partnership and technical co-operation through the exchange of experience and financial assistance and the application of a human rights based approach. The appointment of a special Ambassador for Human Rights in 2000, who has visited over 40 countries over the past three years, is another integral part of this cooperative approach.

2. Advance the protection and promotion of human rights at the national level

- The Netherlands is a party to all major UN human rights instruments[1] and to regional human rights treaties in the context of the Council of Europe.
- The Netherlands is currently in the process of **ratifying** the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman of Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (CRC OP AC)[2].
- The Netherlands will uphold its standing invitation to all **Special Procedures.** The UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Dr Yakin Ertürk, will visit the Netherlands in June 2006.
- The Netherlands will continue cooperating fully with UN human rights **treaty bodies** by meeting the deadlines for submission of periodic reports to them and acting promptly and in good faith on their concluding observations and recommendations.
- The Netherlands will establish a **National Human Rights Institute** in accordance with the *Paris Principles.*
- The Netherlands will continue fighting the scourge of racism. The Netherlands belonged to the first United Nations Member States to adopt a **National Action Plan to combat racism**.

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[1] Treaties and date of entry into force in the Netherlands: CERD – International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (09/01/72), CESCR – International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (11/03/79), CCPR – International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (11/03/79), CAT – Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (20/01/89), CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (22/08/91), CRC – Convention on the Rights of the Child (07/03/95).

[2] Optional protocols to be ratified by the Netherlands with date of signature: CAT – OP – Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (03/06/'05), CRC – OP – AC – Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (07/09/'00).